

Three Women You Never Knew

Lotta Gue

Never was Meant for the Gutter

When her family lost their money, she was thirteen. She had to move into the projects. A new lifestyle, all new friends. Food stamps, behind on the rent, eating toast three days a week. The only time her parents had money was at the first of the month when her mother got her welfare check.

Her father Stanley went into a mental institution after he lost his business. At home he was a turnip -- watching television, drinking Kool Aid, and eating Fritos. He never worked again.

Lotta became the girl who she used to tease, who smelled because she didn't bathe regularly, who never had money for lunch.

Lotta was ashamed when her mother would shop with her at the Salvation Army. She hated wearing other people's clothes. The only time she felt like she was herself was when she was naked.

At least the incest with her mother's brother stopped, after more than seven years. He would come around, but he never had the opportunity.

This is when Joey would show up. Joey was her other self. Her mother thought she was only being a tomboy, but it was more than that. It was like a demon had possessed her. The anger and hell that was raging inside of her needed to have a release. What was that release? Heroin and shoplifting.

Lotta hung around with Louie from the junk yard. His hands

were never clean. She always had grease on her panties - hard to sell them babies nowadays. Even after he took a shower, his hands were rough and shadowed with black in the cracks. Lotta would only see him when she needed money. Everything had a purpose. If it didn't have a purpose, Lotta didn't do it. She wanted something. If you didn't have it, she'd find another way to get it when she was Joey.

The softer side of Lotta. The side she put up for her mother and her father and the few people she cared about. She had a soft spot for people with disabilities.

She didn't take them in, but she recognized their existence and made them feel as if they were truly part of humanity. She worked at a nursing home and was doing good when she was sixteen, and bringing money home to help her mother.

She had forgotten about Joey, and Joey had evidently forgotten about her.

She felt for the old people that were in the nursing home. She'll never forget the day she came to work and a patient she had become fond of had died and was no longer there. That emptiness was an ugliness that would have normally been too much for her to handle, and prompted Joey to come out.

But Joey didn't come out! She had gained the strength from kindness that she had seen, that had been shown to her by the staff of the nursing home, who loved her.

Louie, who had been out of her life, came back into her life, wanting a favor. She had learned to be in a safe, constructive environment. Louie had her steal a doctor's script pad, and forge prescriptions for speed.

Now she was taking speed with Louie. Eventually they got caught and she lost her job. She was seventeen.

She went back to shoplifting and heroin,

She eventually went back to Framingham Women's Prison.

Snookie Lumps Just Needed a Friend

Snooky Lumps, left hand girl, with a bend in it, the nutsiest part of every woman you've ever known.

She met Lotta Gue in prison when she got sentenced for stealing physicians' scripts.

Lotta Gue and Snookie Lumps were not Lesbians when they met, but spending time together in jail and developing a strong bond and safety with each other gave them the comfort to reveal their inner selves to each other. Eventually they would become carpet munchers. They called themselves the Donut Bumpers in prison.

Snookie Lumps' real name was Debbie DuBras. She was a very small-breasted woman who had had to endure two alcoholic step-fathers and an alcoholic mother. Her mother also had a history of severe depression. So Snookie Lumps wasn't coming from the best gene pool.

Her father was successful, but had developed a new life and a new family.

When she was fourteen, she started to run away from home - staying out all night, taking speed. Speed was her main drug of choice, and she chain

smoked and was constantly drinking black coffee. Her nerves were on fire.

She had a brother named Gene, who started to get involved in selling drugs early and moved away from home.

At sixteen Snookie Lumps was put in a foster home with a family named McHenry. They had three children of their own, and three other foster children.

That's where Snookie Lumps met her husband Larry. She got pregnant. They got married. He was always robbing places. He got caught and went to jail.

After a while she started to hang out on the streets again, leaving her child Larry Jr. at home with her foster parents, who eventually would bring up Larry Jr.

Snookie was so wired and so rebellious and so uncontrollable, she never came home. She got arrested buying some coke. She had become a streetwalker, and now was shooting cocaine. This is where she met Lotta. They both needed somebody to trust.

Lotta Gue got out of jail after six months and went home to live with her parents. Her father had really hit rock bottom. He had been taking the anti-depressant Haldol, and a pill called Cogentin to make the side effects from the Haldol wear off. He wasn't taking the Haldol, he was just taking the Cogentin

He took Cogentin - three times the dosage, which made him feel that he was racing at four hundred miles an hour inside, but feeling motionless. A psychiatric zombie of his own making. This drove Lotta's mother to drink.

Now Lotta was living back at home. Her parents

never mentioned the incident that put her in jail. As fucked up as they were, they still tried to be supportive and optimistic.

They were, until Snookie Lumps got out of jail and moved in with Lotta.

Lotta and Snookie would go out for a loaf of bread and come back eight hours later. They would hang around the streets of Lowell and hook. The main pick-up line they used standing on the corner was: "Goin' out? Wanna date?" Cars would drive around the loop until they finally stopped.

Twenty bucks for upstairs, forty bucks for downstairs. They'd work a couple of tricks, get up forty or fifty dollars, and cop some brain oil. (Brain oil is any drug that makes you feel better - of course all drugs make you feel better, or you wouldn't take them.)

The customers were called dates. Sometimes the customers would fall in love with Lotta, who had a more feminine side. Snookie was a bull dyke. She didn't pull the strings, but she had her fingers in the pie.

Sometimes they would talk about their dream date - a man who would let them live with him - he would buy their drugs, and they would occasionally service him. Like a sugar daddy. But most of the men fell in love with Lotta, and Snookie Lumps was always in the picture. They would never let on that they were lovers - this would threaten the date's security.

Now they were getting out of control. They never went home. They crashed at other people's houses. Sometimes they were really coke whores, living on the edge, a razor's edge, a fine line between insanity and sanity, no stops at the border. Just a clear clean run into oblivion. That way they could forget

about their pain.

Snookie Lumps would think of her son, and want to be with him, but she was always fucked up, and her son made Lotta feel a little insecure.

One night they were crashing at a dealer's apartment. They had been up for over four days. They took some ludes and they were out like a light. A friend of the dealer's was there too. He slit his wrists vertically and horizontally up both arms three times. He would have died, but the neighbors heard him banging his head against the wall. The cops kicked the door open, saw the suicide attempt, and called an ambulance. Nobody in the house had heard him. The first person who woke up when the cops broke down the door was the dealer, who dumped his stash of coke into a bucket of acid.

The cops knew what was going on. They woke up Lotta and Snookie and ran them for warrants. Snookie had a warrant issued by her parole officer for skipping a probation appointment. Snookie Lumps went to jail, and you know where Lotta went? To heroin and crime.

Lotta Gue would soon end up in Framingham Women's Prison too.

Judy Gingersnaps

Hanging around strip joints is an unusual experience. It was a trip. When Sidney Hipple got out of Solomon Mental Health, he lived on Summer Street in Lowell. It was a white building. Shit, I thought we talked about that before, in another story. Well anyways, here it is again:

So like I was saying, Sid was living in this one-room

efficiency with the bathroom down the hall. It had a bed, a dresser, a sink, a refrigerator, a stove, and a cabinet, and it was on the first floor.

Next door to Sid lived a woman named Louise. She had also had past stints at Solomon Mental Health -- she was on medication. She was quite a bit overweight, and had a son named Max who came to visit her once in a while. Because of her size, she didn't bathe regularly. But when Sid was in the nut house, a shower was his salvation. A relaxing time, the hot water steaming over your back, that solitude, that serenity, that privateness. Sometimes he'd take two or three showers a day.

Louise wasn't the only person who lived in the building where Sid lived. A guy named Brad, who looked like a young Frank Zappa, lived upstairs with his cousin Lenny. They talked about times when they were so broke, they ate mustard on newspaper -- that's true.

Brad was an all right guy, but he was an alcoholic. He was always bitching about his ex-wife and his kids and not seeing them. Another alcoholic lived down the hall on the first floor from Sid, but he doesn't recall his name. But he was a good guy.

One day Sid came home and his apartment door had been removed from its hinges and had disappeared. Two other apartments had the same thing happen to them. As it turned out, Sid and the other two tenants were behind in their rents, and that's what the landlord did until they got paid up. For a couple of days people watched other people's apartments until they got their doors back. That's true you know. If you can imagine an apartment with no door, no entrance door, it could be an unusual experience.

Sid was on welfare, and someone had stolen his foodstamps. (Later on Sid found out that it was Brad's

cousin Lenny who stole the foodstamps -- guess he didn't want to eat newspaper with mustard. He should have tried fucking ketchup, at least it won't roll off the paper like mustard will. Didn't even have money to buy a fucking vegetable to wrap it in. When you're broke like that, you're dead broke, and nobody you know gives you any money, because they ain't got none either.

So you're waiting for your welfare check to come in. They come in twice a month. Sid was getting about \$87 each check. Like everybody else's, his was usually gone in three or four days -- at best. Rent was like \$21 a week for that luxurious room he had, and he usually owed people at least \$20, and with the rest of it, he'd buy food or foodstamps. So he never had money.

When his check would come in, he would go down to Adams St, where the Spanish folk hung out, and he'd buy six pin joints for \$5, and get high for a couple of days. Sometimes he'd have a couple of bucks, but most of the time he didn't.

And whether he did, or he didn't, he'd still find a way to hang around a club called the Three Copper Men, on Fletcher Street in Lowell. Upstairs bands would play on the weekends, and downstairs were strippers. He'd never have any money. Sometimes he'd go in there with just a buck and buy a coke, to have a place to hang around and something to do. Most of the time he wouldn't have any money, and he would tell the waitress that he was waiting for someone.

He never thought about the strippers too much, until one day, inside his building, that white building on Summer Street, a young woman moved in named Judy Gingersnaps. She must have been in her late twenties, very slender, very nice looking, very pleasant. She lived on the third floor. She had a boyfriend named John who would stop over, who was a nice guy. They became friends with Sid and

some other people in the building.

When you don't have no money, and you don't have no food, there's only one thing to do: go to one of the local churches, and they'll give you a food order at some local supermarket. But, they have to come to your house to give you the check. Sid went to St. Peter's church, and talked to somebody about a food order for ten or fifteen dollars. They said they would send someone to his house the next day. It just so happened that day, that he was washing he only set of clothes. He would wash them in the shower, take off his clothes, and then shower himself. He ran the stove until they dried. And because he had thrown all of his possessions away months before, he had no other clothes but the clothes on his back. He would have a towel wrapped around himself until they dried, which might take a couple hours.

He knew the people from the church would be coming over, and he needed something to wear. So he asked his neighbor Louise if she had something he could borrow. She gave him a nightgown. He put it on, and was waiting with his door open for the people to arrive. Judy and John came down to leave the building and saw Sid in the nightgown. And remember, Louise was a big woman. They told Sid later that when they got outside, Judy said to John, "Was Sidney wearing a nightgown with ruffles?" Needless to say what the reaction of the church people was when they came by to give him his check.

The next week he was talking to Judy about washing his clothes again, and wanted to stop up and visit her, and she asked him if he wanted to borrow one of her negligees, and he said yeah. Judy said, "You want a white one or a black one?" Sid said, "A black one." To make a long story short, Sid became good friends with Judy and started to hang out at the strip joint where she worked. called Nicky's on Gorham Street.

I don't think that Sid ever saw Judy dance, and if he did, it was only once at Nicky's. Judy would hang around there when she wasn't working, and so would Sid. Judy knew Sid was broke, and sometimes she'd buy him a sloe gin fizz. It was interesting hanging around the strip joint, but after a while that got tired for Sid. Eventually Judy stopped living there and Sid got a job.

Before Judy stopped stripping, she got a new boyfriend called Heck. He was from Minnesota, and a nice guy. Sid used to stop over and visit some times. When they weren't making love, they'd let him in. That's where he went on Christmas when he was alone one year. Christmas with Judy and Heck.

Some time later, Sid saw Judy on Merrimack Street, and she said her and Heck were homeless. Sid remembered that Mike of Mike and the Spikes, who was living at 73 Fletcher Street had a doorway from his room to a vacant room. Sid told Judy about this, and took her over to see Mike. Mike, the good sort that he was, didn't mind taking the risk and let them stay next door on the QT. Judy and Heck were good people, and they liked Mike because he was a good guy. Eventually I'm sure, they had to move.

The last time Sid saw Judy, she called him up and said she was moving to New Hampshire and wanted to borrow his hotplate. She stopped over and he gave it to her.

At one time she went back to Minnesota with Heck, but she came back in a couple of weeks -- couldn't stand the boredom. She was an excitement type of woman.

Sid didn't hear anything about her for years, didn't know where she was or what she was doing. Until one day when Sid was hanging out with Johnny B, he mentioned a Judy, and Johnny B said he knew of a Judy, the one he was speaking of. She had been in AA for a number of years and she was doing good. Sid was happy to hear this.

Sid hopes to see Judy in life again some day. They haven't seen each other in eighteen years. But when a guy wears a woman's nightgown under certain circumstances, there's a bond there that can never be broken. That bond is called friendship.

And when you ain't got no money, and you ain't got no foodstamps, and you don't want to eat mustard on newspaper, and you've run out of churches in the neighborhood to hit them up for food orders, sometimes there's someone you can count on, even for just a laugh, or encouragement, or just to listen to you for a minute or two. That's called a friend.